

MARINA BAY CALL TO ACTION

Last-minute Marina bid upsets some on council

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RICHMOND — A last-minute deal proffered by local developers and power broker Darrell Reese has some City Council members and residents fuming.

The city's redevelopment agency requested proposals last August for development and purchase of the 16-acre Marina Center site, which is near the Port of Richmond. Two developers submitted bids.

On Monday, eight days before the two teams were to be interviewed by the City Council, a new group calling itself PLI International sent a letter to council members offering \$4 million in cash for the site and asking for exclusive rights to nego-

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two developers who went through the proposal process were initially scheduled for Tuesday but now will be held April 15.

They are:

■ **STG Group, Santa Rosa:** Proposes retrofitting the current building and using it for assembly or manufacturing. In addition, the group would build two additional structures that would be sold as individual "industrial condos" for research and development companies.

■ **Oliver & Company, Richmond:** Proposes moving a tenant from one of its other buildings, Conifer Crent Paper on Central Avenue, to the Marina Center. This would prevent Conifer Crent from leaving the city, company officials said. The group also plans to develop 20,000 square

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tiating on it. The property is needed "today" to secure two port-related contracts, the letter said.

"We'd like the opportunity to do it, and there are millions of dollars at stake for the city of Richmond," said developer Richard Poe of Penterra Company, one of the principals in PLI.

"The decision is, do we want to save the port, or do we want to bury it?"

PLI's letter Monday to the council was signed by Poe, Jim Cannon of Levin-Richmond Terminal and William Benak, president of Levin Enterprises, the terminal's parent company. It did not submit a formal bid.

Penterra is the master developer of the marina area. Levin-Richmond Terminal is a private port that handles dry bulk materials.

Councilwoman Donna Powers, who recently returned from a trip to Turkey, blasted Poe and his cohorts at Tuesday's meeting, saying the deal "stinks about as much as a Turkish

feet of space for "incubator" research and development.

The site is on Hall Avenue between South Harbour Way and South Marina Way and features an approximately 150,000-square-foot warehouse building.

At Tuesday's meeting, representatives of the two developers who have bid on the project complained that PLI International was skirting the city's process. If the council chose PLI, it could look bad for Richmond, they argued.

"There are other developers watching," said John Troughton of the Galbreath Company, the broker for the STG Group, on Wednesday. The process must be fair, or the "character of the city" could be in question, he said.

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Cannon said Wednesday he took great offense at the remark.

"I think she's an absolutely out-of-control person," he said. "She should have better control of her emotions."

Reese, a former Richmond firefighter, is a well-known lobbyist whose involvement in political deals has been the subject of considerable controversy.

Councilman Alex Evans said Wednesday he didn't think the latest deal involved anything devious. "I honestly believe they got into the process late," he said. "And I don't have a problem with that."

Poe said he could not account for the timing. "Deals just happen," he said Wednesday.

He also said the city could legally decide to reject both initial bidders and choose his proposal. City officials involved in the process could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

City Council interviews with the